

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0114

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT MA

SUBJECT: MALAGASY PAPER PUBLISHES ANALYSIS ON ABORTED COUP

REF: TANANARIVE 0099

SUMMARY: UNDER BANNER HEADLINES, MADAGASCAR MATIN, LEADING DAILY, ON JANUARY 21 CARRIED SIX-COLUMN ANALYSIS OF "FAILED COUP OF DECEMBER 31." ARTICLE WRITTEN BY LATIMER RANGERS OF TRICONTINENTAL NEWS AGENCY WHICH ALSO RECENTLY PUBLISHED CONTROVERSIAL INTERVIEW WITH MONKA KAONA LEADER OF MONIMA PARTY. COUP ANALYSIS SHORT ON FACTS CONCERNING COUP ATTEMPT ITSELF BUT ANALYSIS OF STRAINS IN GOVERNMENT STRIKINGLY EXPLICIT AS IS DISCUSSION OF POWER POSITIONS OF KEY GOMR OFFICIALS. ANALYSIS CLOSELY PARALLELS REFTEL. GOMR REACTION IS AWAITED WITH INTEREST. END SUMMARY.

1. ARTICLE INDICATES THAT ARMED FORCES WENT ON ALERT AT 2300 HOURS DEC 31 AFTER EARLIER EMERGENCY MEETING OF GENERAL RAMANANTSOA AND CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL RAMAROLAHY. GHDR REPORTEDLY WAS SUCCESSFUL IN DISMANTLING NETWORK OF CONSPIRATORS BY ARRESTING ELEVEN OFFICERS AND TWENTY-SOME NCO'S. OF SEVERAL OFFICERS NAMED IN ARTICLE AS PARTICIPANTS IN COUP ATTEMPT ALL BUT ONE WERE AT COMPANY-GRADE LEVEL.

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2. ARTICLE THEN REVIEWS POSSIBLE CAUSES BEHIND COUP SUCH

AS ERRORS OF GENERAL RAMANANESOA "IN UNGLUING ECONOMY."
FAILURE OF COUP, ARTICLE SUGGESTS, PERHAPS ATTRIBUTABLE TO
DIVISION AMONG CONSPIRATORS ON WHETHER OR NOT TO
SEEK POLITICAL SUPPORT OF PSM WHICH WAS STILL BEING DEBATED

WHEN PLOT UNCOVERED. ARTICLE SUGGESTS ALSO THAT THERE
MAY HAVE BEEN "HIGH-PLACED VILLAIN IN PRESENT GOVERNMENT
PULLING THE STRINGS."

3. BULK OF BALANCE OF ARTICLE DEALS WITH LEADING GOMR

FIGURES. GENERAL RAMANANESOA IS DEPICTED AS INDISPENSIBLE
ARBITER, FOLLOWED BY PARAGRAPHS ON RATSIMANDRAVA, RABETAFIKA,
AND RATSIRAKA. MINISTER OF INTERIOR COLONEL RICHARD
RATSIMANDRAVA IS SEEN BY REPORTER RANGERS AS MOST POWERFUL,

AND PERHAPS MOST VULNERABLE, OF MINISTERS WITH POWER BASE
IN GENDARMERIE, CATHOLIC CLERGY, AND RURAL POPULACE. HE
HAS ALSO, HOWEVER, OPENLY ATTACKED POLICIES OF HIS
COLLEAGUES AND APPEARS WILLING TO ACT ALONE ON NATIONAL
ISSUES. DIRECTOR GENERAL OF GOVERNMENT COLONEL ROLAND
RABETAFIKA IS DESCRIBED AS "RIGHT-HAND MAN" OF GENERAL
WITH ARMY SUPPORT AND CONTROL OF INTELLIGENCE APPARATUS.
ARTICLE STATES IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER OR NOT RABETAFIKA
HAS SUPPORT ON AKFM AND PASTOR RICHARD ANDRIAMANJATO.
REPORTER OPENLY LABELS LATTER AS "PRO-SOVIET." ARTICLE
IMPLICITLY RATES FOREIGN MINISTER DIDIER RATSIRAKA AS
POOR THIRD IN TERM OF POWER WHO IS UNAWARE OF LOCAL
SITUATION AND HAS MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO DRUM UP SUPPORT
WITH BETSIMISARAKA AND OTHER COITERS.

4. IN DISCUSSING RATSIMANDRAVA-RABETAFIKA RIVALRY,
"HATRED" BETWEEN ARMY AND GENDARMERIE AS WELL AS BETWEEN

CIVIL
POLICE AND GENDARMERIE IS AIRED. SOURCE OF DISLIKE
IN LATTER CASE WAS GENDARMERIE TAKING SIDES WITH DEMONSTRATORS
DURING EVENTS OF MAY 1972 AGAINST CIVIL POLICE, REPORTER
ASSERTS.

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5. OTHER GOMR OFFICIALS ARE GIVEN INFLATTERING TREATMENT.
MINISTER OF TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT GILLES ANDRIAMAHAZO
AND CHIEF OF STAFF GENRAL PHILIBERT RAMAROLAHY ARE
CHARACTERIZED "AS HOPING TO GET THEIR PENSIONS BEFORE SHIP
SINKS." IN ADDITION, ANDRIAMAHAZO IS QUOTED AS COMPLAING
ABOUT HIGH COST TO GOMR OF HAVING BROKEN TIES WITH SOUTH
AFRICA. MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT EMMANUEL RAKOTOVAHINY
IS CHIDED FOR LACK OF MOVEMENT ON LAND REFORM. MINISTER

OF JUSTICE JACQUES ANDRIANADA IS DISMISSED AS UNSUCCESSFUL MODERATE WHO RUNS WEAK MINISTRY, AND MINISTER OF LABOR DANIEL RAJAKOBA IS CHARACTERIZED AS "DISTINGUISHED BY MAGIC OF HIS WORDS" WITH IMPLICATION THAT ACTION IS LACKING.

6. ARTICLE CONCLUDES WITH HOPE THAT GENERAL RAMANANTSOA "HAS COURAGE TO REORGANIZE HIS GOVERNMENT WITHOUT WHICH FUTURE OF MADAGASCAR QUESTIONABLE."

7. EMBASSY COMMENT: MADAGASCAR MATIN PUBLISHING THIS ARTICLE AT THIS TIME COURAGEOUS EVEN IF MAD MATIN'S PROBABLE ASSESSMENT IS THAT GOMR UNLIKELY TO TAKE PUNITIVE ACTION SO AS NOT TO BE IDENTIFIED WITH CENSORSHIP OF PREVIOUS REGIME. PAPER MAY ALSO BELIEVE THAT GOMR TOO DISORIENTED TO ACT DECISIVELY, BUT EMBASSY SEES THIS AS LESS LIKELY EXPLANATION. BELIEF THAT GOMR IS, AT LEAST, PREOCCUPIED WITH ITS INTERNAL PROBLEMS, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN GIVEN FURTHER CREDENCE BY INACCESSIBILITY OF MINISTER FOR TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH WHOM AMBASSADOR HAS SOUGHT APPOINTMENT FOR PAST SEVERAL DAYS. MINISTER'S AIDE-DE-CAMP ADVISED AMBASSADOR THAT MINISTER IS TIED UP WITH COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETINGS.
MENDENHALL

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